

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director



Contact:
Steve Hayes, Area Management Biologist
Eric Newland, Asst. Area Management Biologist
Phone: (907) 949-1320
Fax: (907) 949-1830

Lower Yukon Area Office
P.O. Box 127
Emmonak, Alaska 99581
Date Issued: 7/9/2012

2012 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 43

Summer Update # 5, Districts 1-6

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Assessment Projects

Dall Point Test Fishery- 5.5-inch drift net project/YDFDA, ADF&G

The cumulative summer chum salmon CPUE through July 6 is 1,303.06. The project did not operate July 7 or July 8 due to rough water conditions.

Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF)- 8.5-inch set net project/ADF&G, YDFDA

The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE through July 8 is 6.12, which is below the average of 21.47 for this date. It is also below the average of 19.85 for historical late years for this date.

Additionally, test fishing for Chinook salmon with 8.25-inch drift gillnet gear is being conducted at the Big Eddy location. The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE through July 8 is 354.24.

Summer Chum Drift Test Fishery- 5.5-inch drift net project/ADFG, YDFDA

The cumulative summer chum salmon CPUE through July 8 is 14,081.72, which is well above the historical median of 4,563.62 for this date.

Mountain Village Chinook Drift Test Fishery- 7.5-inch mesh drift net project/YDFDA, ATC, ADFG

The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE through July 8 is 1,648.89, which is above the (2010-2011) average of 1,077.61.

Andreafsky River weir/USFWS

The cumulative counts through July 8 are 312 Chinook and 31,045 summer chum salmon.

Pilot Station sonar project/ADFG

Chinook salmon passage at Pilot Station sonar is estimated to be approximately 96,342 through July 8, which is below the historical average of 138,000 for this date. It is also below the average of 123,000 for historical late years for this date. Summer chum salmon passage is estimated to be approximately 1.8 million which is above the historical median of 1.2 million for this date.

Anvik River sonar project/ADFG

The summer chum salmon passage is estimated to be approximately 220,747 through July 8, which is near the historical median of 220,886 for this date.

Gisasa River weir/USFWS

The cumulative counts through July 8 are 73 Chinook and 22,126 summer chum salmon.

Henshaw Creek Weir/TCC

The cumulative counts through July 7 are 5 Chinook and 28 summer chum salmon.

Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/Zuray

The cumulative expanded counts through July 8 are 602 Chinook and 92 summer chum salmon.

Eagle Sonar/ADFG

The Eagle sonar project was operational as of July 4. The cumulative Chinook salmon passage at Eagle sonar is estimated to be approximately 3 through July 8.

Chena/ADFG

The Chena river tower was operational as of July 5. The cumulative expanded counts through July 8 are 3 Chinook salmon and 3 summer chum salmon.

NOTE: Other assessment projects will be added as they become operational.

Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.5-inch LYTF set nets through July 4 (Big Eddy) and June 28 (Middle Mouth) was 2% age-4, 26% age-5, 69% age-6, and 3% age-7 fish. Females composed 59% of fish sampled. The sample size was 514 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.25-inch Big Eddy drift test fishery through July 6 was 2% age-4, 33% age-5, 63% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. Females composed 62% of fish sampled. The sample size was 218 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the subsistence harvest collected by fishermen contracted by the Association of Village Council Presidents through June 19 in Districts 1 and 2 was 3% age-4, 54% age-5, 41% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. Females composed 28% of fish sampled. The sample size was 339 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the incidental commercial harvest through July 5 (Period 5) in District 1 was 21% age-4, 47% age-5, 32% age-6, and 1% age-7. Females composed 29% of fish sampled. The sample size was 406 fish.

The chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch LYTF drift nets through July 6 (Big Eddy) and June 28 (Middle Mouth) was 63% age-4, 31% age-5, and 6% age-6 fish. Females composed 53% of fish sampled. The sample size was 981 fish.

Assessment

Chinook salmon run timing continues to track considerably below historical averages, similar to trends observed in Chinook salmon runs throughout the state of Alaska in 2012. The Pilot Station sonar cumulative passage estimate of approximately 96,000 Chinook salmon through July 8 is well below the historical average of 138,000 for this date, and is also below the average passage estimates at this point for late run years, of approximately 123,000. Current data suggest the 2012 median at LYTF and Pilot Station sonar was approximately June 26 and June 28, respectively, which are one day later than the historical averages for late run years. For late run years, on average more than 90% of the run had passed Pilot Station sonar by July 8. Based on historical late year run timing and current data, the 2012 Chinook salmon run size is coming in at the lower end of the preseason outlook estimate of 109,000, or potentially lower.

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the second pulse of Chinook salmon past Pilot Station sonar (June 26 – 30) revealed that approximately 47% were Canadian-origin Chinook salmon suggesting the Canadian run size is weak and similar to 2008 and 2010. The department is currently analyzing the third pulse of Chinook salmon past Pilot Station sonar. For more background information on MSA for Yukon River Chinook salmon, please refer to the department's Gene Conservation Laboratory webpage for related documents and latest updates (http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishinggeneconservationlab.yukonchinook_baseline).

Summer chum salmon passage through July 8 at Pilot Station sonar is estimated to be approximately 1.85 million, which is above the historical median of 1.2 million for this date. The third quartile of the summer chum run at Pilot Station is July 3. Based on historical run timing, the summer chum run is on track with the upper end of the preseason outlook estimate of 2.0 million.

Current Management

Consistent with preseason management strategies, subsistence fishing periods have been canceled in Districts 1-4 and Subdistricts 5-A,B&C to protect the first and second pulses of Chinook salmon and similar actions will be implemented in Subdistrict 5-D based on migratory timing of Chinook salmon. Based on the assessment information to date, the Chinook salmon run is poor, and additional measures are being taken to conserve Chinook salmon for escapement. Following the pulse closures subsequent subsistence fishing periods have been reduced in time and gear restrictions have also been implemented in the Coastal District and Districts 1-4 in an effort to conserve Chinook salmon and allow subsistence fishermen the opportunity to target summer chum salmon.

The current subsistence fishing schedules are as follows:

Coastal District: The entire Coastal District is currently open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day. Gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

District 1: Subsistence salmon fishing in District 1, which includes the Black River, is currently closed. District 1 will reopen at 8:00 p.m. Monday, July 9. This will be an 18-hour subsistence salmon fishing period, from 8:00 p.m. Monday, July 9, until 2:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 10. Gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon. The department will notify fishermen by July 10 concerning the next subsistence salmon fishing period and schedule for District 1.

District 2: Subsistence salmon fishing in District 2 is currently closed. The department will notify fishermen by July 10 concerning the next subsistence salmon fishing period and schedule for District 2.

District 3: Subsistence salmon fishing in District 3 is currently closed. The department will notify fishermen by July 10 concerning the next subsistence salmon fishing period and schedule for District 3.

Subdistrict 4-A-Lower (from $\frac{3}{4}$ miles downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Stink Creek): This area includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik and Grayling. Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A-Lower will begin a reduced fishing schedule on Monday, July 9. In Subdistrict 4-A-Lower subsistence salmon fishing will be open from 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 9, until 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 10 and from 6:00 p.m. Thursday, July 12, until 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 13. These will be 24-hour subsistence salmon fishing periods with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size. Fish wheels must be equipped with a chute and all Chinook salmon caught in fish wheels must be returned to the water alive. Fish wheels must be closely attended while in operation. The department will notify fishermen by July 13 concerning the next subsistence salmon fishing period and schedule for this lower portion of Subdistrict 4-A.

Subdistrict 4-A-Upper: (from Stink Creek upstream to Cone Point): This area includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk. Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A-Upper is currently closed and will remain closed until 6:00 p.m. Thursday, July 12. In Subdistrict 4-A-Upper subsistence salmon fishing will be open from 6:00 p.m. Thursday, July 12, until 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 13. This will be a 24-hour subsistence salmon fishing period with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size. Fish wheels must be equipped with a chute and all Chinook salmon caught in fish wheels must be returned to the water alive. Fish wheels must be closely attended while in operation. The department will notify fishermen by July 13 concerning the next subsistence salmon fishing period and schedule for this upper portion of Subdistrict 4-A.

Subdistricts 4-B&C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek): This area includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby. Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C is currently closed and will remain closed for the period that was scheduled from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 11, until 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 13. The department will notify fishermen by

July 13 concerning the next subsistence salmon fishing period and schedule for Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C.

Subdistricts 5-A,B&C: Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C is currently closed and will remain closed for the next subsistence salmon fishing period to conserve Chinook salmon. The department will notify fishermen by July 11 concerning the next subsistence salmon fishing period and schedule for Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C.

In an effort to protect Chinook salmon as they pass through this long section of river, Subdistrict 5-D will be divided into three separate areas.

Subdistricts 5-D-Lower (from an ADF&G regulatory marker 2 miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the Hadweenzic River and including all adjacent tributaries): This area includes the communities of Stevens Village and Beaver. Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours per day 7 days per week. Subsistence salmon fishing will close at 7:00 p.m. Thursday, July 12 and will remain closed until further notice. The department will notify fishermen by July 15 concerning the subsistence salmon fishing schedule for this lower portion of Subdistrict 5-D.

Fishermen in Districts 1-4, and Subdistricts 5-A,B&C should stand by for short notice news releases regarding changes to subsistence salmon fishing schedules and gear restrictions.

Subdistricts 5-D-Middle (from the Hadweenzic River upstream to 22 Mile Slough and including all adjacent tributaries): This area includes the community of Fort Yukon. Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours per day 7 days per week.

Subdistrict 5-D-Upper (from 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries): This area includes the communities of Circle, and Eagle. Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours per day 7 days per week.

District 6: The subsistence salmon fishing schedule consists of two 42-hour fishing periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays.

The Old Minto Area: Subsistence salmon fishing is open 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays.

At this time, in Districts 5 and 6, fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller during open subsistence salmon fishing periods.

The Innoko River: Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day. Gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

The Koyukuk River: Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day. Gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches and a length greater than 60 feet must be removed from the water.

Commercial Fishing

Based on the current abundance of summer chum salmon, commercial salmon fishing periods have been scheduled in Districts 1, 2, and Subdistrict 4-A.

In Districts 1 and 2, the areas open to commercial fishing have been limited to only portions of these districts in which the incidental harvest rate of Chinook salmon is anticipated to be low. The sale of Chinook salmon has been prohibited in these districts.

The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest for District 1 through July 7 (Periods 1-7) is 116,598 summer chum salmon, and 1,454 Chinook salmon have been reported as caught but not sold.

The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest for District 2 through July 8 (Periods 1-2) is 12,749 summer chum salmon, and 165 Chinook salmon have been reported as caught but not sold.

Preliminary harvest information for Subdistrict 4-A

Nine 12-hour commercial fishing periods have been announced through July 10. Commercial fishing gear is restricted to fish wheels only which must be manned at all times of operation. All Chinook salmon caught in the fish wheels must be immediately returned to the water alive.

The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest for Subdistrict 4-A through July 8 is not available at this time.

Recorded fishery announcements and updates will be available 24 hours a day at 949-1731 or 1-866-479-7387. If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the Emmonak ADF&G office at 949-1320. The Emmonak ADF&G office will stand by on VHF channel 7A.

-end-